

Haftarah Weekly

Shabbat Vayeishev – Amos 2:6 – 3:8

This weeks Haftarah gives us a frightening message about the importance of *bein adam lachaveiro*. The first passuk in the Haftarah is as always an introduction to the rest of the Haftarah. "So says Hashem: For three rebellious sins – but should I not exact retribution for the fourth – for their having sold a righteous man for silver and a destitute one for the sake of shoes?". The three rebellious sins are, as Chazal explain, the three cardinal sins: idol worship, forbidden relationships and murder. However, the passuk says, Hashem is willing to overlook those sins, or at least to delay the punishment. Nevertheless, for the sins of 'having sold a righteous man for silver, and a destitute one for the sake of shoes', Hashem declares them unforgivable. This is referring to the persecution of the poor, in particular by the corrupt judges that accepted bribes from the rich.

This is obviously connected with our sedra, Where a righteous man, Yoseph, is sold for money by the brothers. This fits in even better with the passuk, as Chazal explain, that the money received from Yoseph's sale was used to buy shoes *'and a destitute one for the sake*

of shoes'.

How can it be that for the most serious cardinal sins, Hashem is willing to grant forgiveness, but with the persecution of the poor, Hashem declared them unforgivable?

One can explain that the basis for this is that the 'poor' trust Hashem entirely. The poor realise that their lot is from Hashem whereas the rich are more likely to believe in their own abilities and think that all their financial prowess comes from their own expertise. Therefore, Hashem pledges to come immediately to the aid of the poor and responds harshly and quickly to any injustice done to them. So therefore, we can say that the three cardinal sins are an attack against Hashem, so Hashem can give time for repentance.

Yet again we can see how important mitzvot between men are. We know that the second temple was destroyed because of Sinat Chinam, baseless hatred. The Gemara says that in each generation when the temple isn't built, it is as if the temple was destroyed again. We must therefore, take care in how we act to each other, and especially to the vulnerable in society.

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THE LIVING TORAH

FROM HASMONEAN HIGH SCHOOL

לעלוי נשמת ר' אליהו רחמים בן מאיר דוד ע"ה ואחיו ר' עבדאללה פרג בן מאיר דוד ע"ה
No. 268 Parshas Vayeishev 5768 פרשת וישב תשס"ח מס' רסח

An Empty Pit - A Full Flask

ויקחהו וישלכו אתו הברה והבור רק אין בו מים (ל"ז:כ"ד)

Then they took him and cast him into the pit, and the pit was empty, no water was in it.

In פ' וישב, when describing the pit into which Yoseph was thrown, the pasuk writes- והבור רק אין בו מים. The גמרא, in חגיגה (דף ג'.), qualifies that although it was void of water, snakes and scorpions occupied it. In response to the obvious question that surely then, it was not empty, it would appear that there is a deeper message contained in the pasuk. It was precisely due to the lack of water - an allusion to Torah - that the strength of impurity had place onto which to attach them (Heard from R. D. Sulzbacher). Even so, in face of such a threat, Yoseph survived. How did this happen? Though one thrown into a waterless pit may well die of thirst, if he were to be carrying a flask of water on his back, this would give him some sort of hope. So too, Yoseph's upbringing between the knees of Ya'akov had more than equipped him to tackle the challenges which lay ahead.

It would seem that the events surrounding the pit were a forerunner for what was yet to come. Yoseph was to find himself ruler over the Mother of impurities and yet he still managed to emerge unscathed. How was this? It was due to the fact that his lips never ceased from uttering the living words of Torah, as testified to by Chazal. It was his ability to segregate himself from his surroundings in which he found himself entrenched, which allowed him to raise himself above their futilities.

This age-old key to survival is found once again in the chanukah story. The lone jug of oil which remained untainted, was that which was sealed and concealed beneath the ground. Though we venture into the outside world, we must remain cognisant that in order not to be negatively influenced, we must remain within our own parameters. We need to remain vigilant and stand staunch, not allowing any foreign material to penetrate the soul we so dearly protect.

Contributed Anonymously

Words of the Wise

Last week commemorated the time when R' Shneur Zalman of Liady, the Baal HaTanya (First Lubavitcher Rebbe) was released from prison. He was an extremely saintly man – the Gadol Hador, and it was a result of his religious activities that he was thrown into prison.

When R' Shneur Zalman was imprisoned in St Petersburg, Russia, the Minister of Police came to interrogate him. As soon as he stepped into the room, he could sense the exalted presence of a special person. The minister was an educated and intelligent man and was even familiar with the Torah and its passages. He approached the Rebbe and said,

"I would like to ask you a question on a verse of your Torah. Would you mind answering it?"

"Ask to your heart's content," replied the Rebbe.

"Could you explain why we find in Genesis that it says, "And G-d called to Adam and said to him: 'Where are you?'" Did the Almighty not know where he was?"

The Baal HaTanya responded by asking the minister whether he believed that the Torah is eternal and valid for every generation and whether it is relevant and applicable to every man that walks this earth. The minister replied that he did indeed believe that. The Rebbe proceeded to explain that the verse applies every minute of the

day. G-d is forever calling to each person and asking 'Where are you?' 'Where are you in this world?' G-d allots everyone a lifetime to do what is righteous and decent in His eyes. Every person must do their utmost to execute G-d's will by being kind and doing good deeds. Every day, man must make a calculation whether he is fulfilling what G-d wants. He must review the years gone by and decide whether he has used them for good or bad. The Russian minister heard these words and was overwhelmed. He enthusiastically accepted the Rebbe's answer and continued to converse with the Tzaddik throughout his imprisonment. The more he talked to him, the greater his thirst became to learn from the Rebbe's wisdom and greatness. He even suggested to the Czar of Russia that the Rebbe was being held under false pretences and did his utmost to ensure the release of the Rebbe.

With regards to this fundamental lesson taught by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, the Ramchal, in chapters 2 and 3 of his famous work the Mesilas Yesharim stresses the importance of weighing up the positives and negatives of every action before one does it. By making this calculation, one will find it easy to avoid sin and do what is right in G-d's eyes. He states further that one should even set aside time specifically to evaluate one's deeds, presumably, to reflect on deeds that they have already done. This only serves to strengthen the message of the Rebbe that one should remember that G-d is constantly asking 'Where are you?'

M'lachah of the Week

Tochen – Grinding

Tochen is anything that breaks something into smaller parts that will be more easily used – originally grinding wheat into flour. It has been extended to crushing, grinding and chopping by hand or with a utensil. However, here are exceptions to the prohibitions of Tochen: grinding for immediate use, grinding with a shinui, grinding items that do not grow in the ground, and grinding already-ground substances.

Originally medicines were prepared by grinding and it was therefore forbidden to take medication for minor injuries. However, nowadays, since they are not usually ground, there is some room for leniency in taking medication for mild illnesses. A Rav should be consulted.

The Power of Mesiras Nefesh

יוסף was sent by his father יעקב to go and visit his brothers in חברון. When he arrived there he met the מלאך גבריאל who informed him that his brothers had gone to דתן and were plotting against him.

Nonetheless he went on to דתן and subsequently was sold as a slave to Egypt.

The דברי אברהם asks what was the purpose of this angel's mission? If יוסף realized it was an angel why didn't he listen and refrain from going, and if he didn't realise then, what was the point of sending the angel in the first place?

The answer is that יוסף definitely realised that it was an angel but he was being tested by Hashem to see if in spite of the danger he would still go and fulfil his father's request and indeed he remained strong and went to visit his brothers to fulfil מצות אב מסירת נפש with כיבוד אב.

With this we can understand another Chazal. It says in רש"י פרשת וישב that עשו is compared to straw and יוסף to a fire and the fire consumes the

straw which means the קדושה of יוסף can overcome the wickedness of עשו.

The question is asked why is it particularly יוסף who consumes עשו and not יעקב?

The answer is that the whole strength of עשו was his כיבוד אב, so for that reason it is יוסף who comes along (one who was מוסר נפש for כיבוד אב, something עשו had never done) and outdid עשו. This had the power to remove this only Z'chus of עשו.

This is a lesson for us of the tremendous power and effect of the Mitzvah of כיבוד אב done with מסירת נפש.

So the next time a parent ask you to do something, instead of thinking how difficult it may be, say to yourself, on the contrary, the more difficult it is the greater the power and Z'chus it is!

Written by Rabbi Gerber

Gematria of the Week

At the beginning of this week's Parsha, the Torah describes Yosef as a נער – a lad. This is surprising as just a few words earlier it tells us that Yosef was 17 years old, an age of maturity, therefore it is not befitting Yosef to call him a lad. However, a nice explanation is brought by the Baal Haturim to explain why this is so. נער has the same Gematria (320) as שוטה – a fool. At the end of the aforementioned Possuk, we are told that Yosef brought evil reports about his brothers – Loshon Hora. The possuk in Mishlei (10:18) says "One who conceals hatred has lying lips, but one who utters slander is a fool." From this proverb we learn that one who slanders is a fool, and consequently, Yosef, who told Loshon Hora about his brothers, is labelled a נער which is likened to a fool.

Riddle of the week

Where do we find 15 consecutive words beginning with the letter "ו"?

Answer to last week's riddle:

Which Mitzvah is described in the Torah with non-Hebrew word(s)?

Tefillin is described with the word:

'totaphot', this is not hebrew but a mixture of 'tot' - 'Caspi' and 'fot' - 'Afriki', both words mean two, thus a combination equals 4, the number of compartments in the Tefillin